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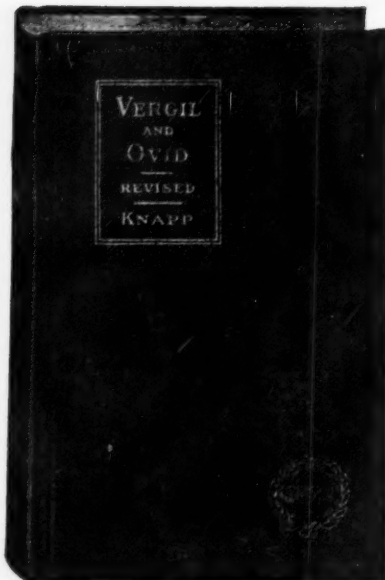
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## THE SUITORS' COMPETITION IN ARCHERY

In his recent and illuminating work, *The Composition of Homer's Odyssey*, Professor W. J. Woodhouse<sup>1</sup> protests<sup>2</sup> that archaeologists have done little to explain the precise nature of the feat in archery that was proposed to the suitors by Penelope and brilliantly accomplished by Odysseus alone. He maintains, further<sup>3</sup>, that the execution of the shot, unlike the stringing of the bow, called for skill, not for strength. I propose in this paper to conduct a reexamination of the whole question of the contest.

The chief passages in the *Odyssey* that bear on the competition with the bow may be rendered as follows:

(1) <sup>4</sup><Penelope speaks>.—'I shall presently appoint a contest, namely the axes, twelve in number, that he used to set up in a row in the halls, like ship-props; and he would stand at a distance and shoot an arrow through them. I will set this contest before the suitors: whoever shall string the bow in his hands most easily and shoot an arrow through the twelve axes, him will I accompany and forsake this dwelling'.

(2) <sup>6</sup><Odysseus speaks>.—'The clever Odysseus will be here before these men, for all their handling of the polished bow, shall string it and shoot an arrow through the iron'.

(3) <sup>8</sup>'And first he [= Telemachus] set up the axes, after digging one long trench for all; and he made them straight to the line, and about them he tramped the earth solid'.

(4) <sup>7</sup>'But another, a wandering beggarman (men will say) easily strung the bow and shot through the iron'.

(5) <sup>8</sup>'He [= Odysseus] took this arrow and placed it on the bow's elbow and drew the bowstring and the notched arrow even from the stool where he sat; and he shot the arrow with good aim and did not miss the *πρώτης στείλειης* of all the axes; but the arrow weighted with bronze passed right through *θύραξ*<sup>9a</sup>.

(6) <sup>9</sup><The shade of Amphimedon addresses that of Agamemnon in the lower world>.—'Then, with great cunning, he bade his wife set before the suitors the bow and the grey iron as a contest for us ill-fated men and the beginning of our destruction. . . . Then he took the bow in his hand, the much-enduring, goodly Odysseus, and he strung it with ease and sent an arrow through the iron'.

With the problem of how the bow was first bent we are not concerned. There are many methods that may be employed in securing leverage for the stringing of the weapon. The success of Odysseus seems to be attributed as much to his superior technique as to his strength of hand and arm. But once the bow was strung, how was this extraordinary shot brought off? Some of the older translators and commentators<sup>10</sup>

assumed that the arrow was projected through the helve-holes of the twelve axes set up in line. As a concomitant to this view it was necessary to postulate the removal of the handles of the axes, whose heads would then be held upright by having the blades thrust into the earth of the floor. This explanation is decidedly feeble. How could the archer, sitting on a stool, as Homer takes the trouble to indicate, have possibly shot an arrow through twelve helve-holes set necessarily on a lower level? Another belief, somewhat more rational, was that the axes were so called by way of courtesy, being in fact merely rings set on the ends of wooden handles. What possible use could have been made of an implement of this sort? The Achaeans were a practical folk, and Odysseus can hardly be supposed to have invented the tool with an eye to his personal amusement. Further, elsewhere in Homer, *πῆλεκος* is always an axe.

Autenrieth's explanation<sup>11</sup> is equally futile. He declares the *pelekeis* to have been "wedge-shaped blocks of iron, resembling axes, which were placed in line, and then the attempt was made to shoot an arrow through the helve-holes". Precisely what this means was best known to himself.

Seymour<sup>12</sup> seeks to revive an explanation that first appears, I think, in a woodcut in the first edition of Chapman's *Homer*. Professor Seymour writes thus: "perhaps we must suppose that the helves of the axes were crossed and that the arrow was shot between them. . . ." Such a view is quite within the bounds of reason, but it takes no cognizance of the repeated expression 'through the iron': *διὰ σιδήρου* can hardly mean 'between the iron heads'.

A very long time ago, the Count De Caylus<sup>13</sup>, the most brilliant of eighteenth-century antiquaries, had assumed the possibility of the existence, in Homer's time, of axe-heads which were, for some unknown reason, perforated from side to side, as well as perforated longitudinally for the insertion of the handle. This theory, which seems to have received little or no attention from Homeric scholars, was revived a century later by Helbig<sup>14</sup>. The progress that had been made in the science of archaeology in the meantime enabled Helbig to point to two types of ancient axe that seemed each to fulfil the requirements of the archery-test of the *Odyssey*, though neither can be said to belong to the Bronze Age or even to the early Iron Age. The

<sup>11</sup>Georg Autenrieth, *A Homeric Dictionary*, Translated by Robert P. Keep<sup>4</sup>, under *πῆλεκός* (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1888).

<sup>12</sup>Thomas Day Seymour, *Life in the Homeric Age*<sup>5</sup>, 294 (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1914). I have not seen the original publication of Chapman, but I have seen the illustration in question published elsewhere.

<sup>13</sup>Comte Anne Claude Philippe De Caylus, *Tableaux Tirés d'Homere et de Virgile* (1781). This is cited by Friedreich, in note to page 353 (see note 10, above). I have not seen this work of Caylus.

<sup>14</sup>Wolfgang Helbig, *Das Homerische Epos*<sup>6</sup>, 348-353 (Leipzig, Teubner, 1887).

<sup>1</sup>W. J. Woodhouse, *The Composition of Homer's Odyssey* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1930). <sup>2</sup>For a review of this book, by Professor S. E. Bassett, see *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* 25.5-7. C. K. >.

<sup>3</sup>19.572-579. The last three lines are repeated in 21.75-77. <sup>4</sup>19.585-587. <sup>5</sup>21.120-122. <sup>6</sup>21.327-328. <sup>7</sup>21.419-423. <sup>8</sup>In this passage the words that remain in the original are of not altogether certain interpretation. <sup>9</sup>24.167-177.

<sup>10</sup>These views are discussed briefly by J. B. Friedreich, *Die Realien in der Iliade und Odyssee*<sup>8</sup>, 353 (Erlangen, Ferdinand Enke, 1886).

more likely of the two is the axe wielded by an Amazon<sup>15</sup> on one of the sculptured metopes of Temple E at Selinus, which dates about 480-470 B. C. The head is two-fold, with a spike on one side and on the other a U-shaped blade hollowed out in such a way that it presents the appearance of the now obsolete domestic meat-mincer. The type is further known from artistic representations of it from as far afield as southern Russia<sup>16</sup>, and three actual specimens were found in a fifth-century grave at Orvieto<sup>17</sup>.

De Caylus and Helbig, widely separated as they were in point of time, were both surely on the right track. More abundant evidence that has come to light in the course of the last forty years has clearly demonstrated that, in the late Bronze Age and the early Iron Age, there existed several varieties of axes whose blades were perforated for purposes additional to the attachment of the handle. The contest in the *Odyssey* to my mind clearly supposes the employment of some such implement. It is one's task, therefore, to discover the most probable type of axe. The four varieties that seem capable of conforming to the requirements may be called, for convenience, the Egyptian, the Sumerian, the Siberian, and the Syrian.

The general appearance of the true Egyptian<sup>18</sup> axe is not unlike that of the medieval pole-axe<sup>19</sup>, but structurally there is a marked difference between them. The edge of the true Egyptian axe is crescent-shaped, and the back of the axe is in the form of two crescents that meet at its center. There are thus three projecting points of metal, each of which is furnished with rivet-holes, and the helve is attached thereto directly, without the employment of any such thing as a helve-hole. It is only when the handle is attached that the axe seems to be perforated through the head. Another type, with complete and true perforations, occasionally occurring in Egypt, seems to be an importation from Syria<sup>20</sup>. The Egyptian style of axe is found along the northern African littoral as far west as Carthage<sup>20</sup>.

The Sumerian<sup>21</sup> axe is double-bitted, with a central helve-hole, and two large gaps in the blades, one on either side of the 'eye'. It may be ruled out of consideration here, as there seems to be no evidence for its dissemination outside Mesopotamia.

<sup>15</sup>Most recently reproduced by Gisela M. A. Richter, *The Sculpture and Sculptors of the Greeks*, Figure 412 (Yale University Press, 1930). This type of axe is quite distinct, be it noted, from the orthodox 'Amazon-axe', which has a wide distribution (see Carl Schuchhardt, *Alturopa*, 247-248 [Berlin, Walter De Gruyter, 1926]).

<sup>16</sup>I have observed an axe precisely similar to this one in the hands of a Scythian represented on a gold *calathos* from a tomb in Great Bliznitsa near the Bosphorus (Ellis H. Minns, *Scythians and Greeks*, 425, Figure 315 [Cambridge: At the University Press, 1913]). The curious axe found on bronze coins of Olbia (Minns, Plate 3) is probably different from this type.

<sup>17</sup>One of these is figured in Daremberg et Saglio, *Dictionnaire des Antiquités Grecques et Romaines*, 4.1168, Figure 6270.

<sup>18</sup>See *L'Anthropologie* 1 (1890), Plate 5, Numbers 32, 33, 14 (1903), 662-665, Figures 1-5. The evolution of the Egyptian type of axe from a stone antecedent is clearly shown in *L'Anthropologie* 18 (1907), 153, Figures 23-25.

<sup>19</sup>Compare Charles Henry Ashdown, *Arms and Armour*, 210 (New York, Dodge Publishing Company). There is no date of publication in the book. But the book was published in 1909.

<sup>20</sup>See Peter Thomsen, in Max Ebert's *Reallexikon der Vorgeschichte*, 1.296 (Berlin, Walter De Gruyter, 1924).

<sup>21</sup>See *Musées de l'Algérie et de la Tunisie* 1 (1900), Plate 16, Figure 2.

<sup>22</sup>See V. Gordon Childe, *The Most Ancient East*, 177, Figure 72 (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1929). Seemingly the holes in this strange type of axe were utilized for lashing the head to the handle.

The head of the Siberian<sup>22</sup> axe is long and adze-like, and it contains a single triangular aperture. The type probably enjoyed no more than a local popularity.

So far as I am aware, the first specimen of what I have chosen to call the Syrian axe came to light on the occasion of the excavation of the famous Vapheio Tomb<sup>23</sup> in 1889. A dozen years before, Schliemann<sup>24</sup> had discovered at Mycenae a mould for making an implement of this sort, but he had misunderstood its precise nature. Its true purpose has been made clear by H. Blümner<sup>25</sup>. These are the only examples, I think, of the occurrence of this variety of axe on Greek soil, if we except examples of its portrayal on gems which are themselves importations<sup>26</sup>.

The Syrian axe may be described as follows. It has a heavy, semicircular blade, which in the Vapheio example measures 0.145 m. by 0.145 m. Toward the center of the blade are two large apertures, from side to side, roughly circular or ovoid in form, and only a short distance apart. The apertures of the Vapheio axe are approximately 0.04 m. by 0.05 m. in diameter. In some examples the holes are much larger relatively, in others much smaller.

Of this type of axe, Lydia<sup>27</sup> has yielded a single example; this is on an engraved gem. A similar representation has come from Cnossos<sup>28</sup>. Dr. W. F. Albright, Director of the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem, informs me that the axe is found very rarely in Palestine proper. I know of no published example from that territory except one from Jericho<sup>29</sup>—an axe-head of almost pure copper. Phoenician gems<sup>30</sup>—from Phoenicia and elsewhere—supply several examples. Two actual specimens come from Sidon<sup>31</sup> and one from Tyre<sup>32</sup>; the last is an iron axe. Susa<sup>33</sup>, likewise, has yielded a single specimen.

But the home of this type of axe seems to have been Syria. The region of Beirut<sup>34</sup> has provided two examples in iron and four in bronze. Two have been found at Es-Sagara<sup>35</sup>, one at Tell et-Tin<sup>36</sup>, one at Kadesh<sup>37</sup> on the Orontes, and others in various parts of Syria<sup>38</sup>. There may also be mentioned a number

<sup>22</sup>Minns (as cited in note 16, above), 244, Figure 152.

<sup>23</sup>*Archäologische Ephemeris* for 1889, 150, Plate 8; Chrestos Tsountas and J. Irving Manatt, *The Mycenaean Age*, 176, Figure 94 (Boston, Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1897).

<sup>24</sup>Heinrich Schliemann, *Mycenae* 177, Figure 162 (Paris, Hachette et Cie, 1876).

<sup>25</sup>H. Blümner, *Technologie und Terminologie der Gewerbe und Künste der Griechen und Römer*, 3.237 (Leipzig, Teubner, 1884).

<sup>26</sup>See Adolf Furtwängler, *Die Antiken Gemmen*, 1, Plate 15.4, 9, 10, 61.11, 12 (Leipzig and Berlin, Giesecke and Devrient, 1900).

<sup>27</sup>It is now in the Louvre; see Georges Perrot et Charles Chipiez, *Histoire de l'Art*, 5.295 (Paris, Hachette et Cie, 1890).

<sup>28</sup>See *British School Annual*, 7 (1900-1901), 20.

<sup>29</sup>Ernst Sellin and Carl Watzinger, *Jericho*, Figure 105 (Leipzig, J. C. Hinrichs, 1913).

<sup>30</sup>Compare note 26, above.

<sup>31</sup>British Museum, Greenwell Collection, Numbers 842-843.

<sup>32</sup>Thomsen (see note 19, above), in Ebert, *Reallexikon*, ... 1 (1924), 296.

<sup>33</sup>Jacques de Morgan, *Prehistoric Man*, Figure 54.2 (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1925).

<sup>34</sup>For the examples in iron see *Mélanges Univ. Beyrouth*, 7 (1914-1921), Plate 20; for the examples in bronze see *Palestine Exploration Fund, Quarterly Statement*, 22 (1890), 45. Compare *Archaeologia* 58 (1904), 13-14.

<sup>35</sup>*Palestine Exploration Fund, Quarterly Statement*, 21 (1889), 77.

<sup>36</sup>*Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres: Comptes Rendus des Séances, Fourth Series*, 23 (1895), 457. Compare Morgan (see note 33, above), Figure 58.4.

<sup>37</sup>*L'Anthropologie* 12 (1901), 168, Figure 3 (in the text there this is erroneously called Figure 4).

<sup>38</sup>Thomsen (see note 19, above), in *Reallexikon*, 1 (1924), 296.

Three are in the Musée d'Archéologie at Lyons. Compare also an axe from Kafer-Djarrar (G. Contenau, *La Civilisation Phénicienne*, Figure 81 [Paris, Payot, 1928]).



of axes of similar type and of Syrian provenance whose structure is so fragile that they could never have been employed for practical purposes<sup>39</sup>. Other examples of the style, as yet unpublished, have come to light in the recent excavations in Syria. Owing to the appearance of the blade with the two holes symmetrically placed in relation to the axis of the implement, this axe has gained from the excavators the name of the 'spectacles axe'.

Our choice of axes for use in the suitors' competition seems clearly to be narrowed to (1) the Egyptian, (2) the Amazon, and (3) the 'spectacles axe'.

The Egyptian axe may be dismissed from consideration, for the following reasons. Though the exigencies of chronology do not present any insuperable barrier, there seems to have been no knowledge of the implement outside of those regions where the influence of Egypt was immediately felt<sup>40</sup>. Nothing is known of it in Greece. In any event, the small size of the 'apertures' in the blade are virtually conclusive against the possibility of the axe's being used for the test.

The Amazon-axe also seems not to have been known in Greece proper, and the specimens of it that are known belong to the classical rather than to the Homeric period. Furthermore, the target that such an axe would have provided, even in series, would have been too large for the purpose in question. To be able to shoot through a three-inch hole at a distance of a dozen yards would not have taxed the skill of even a mediocre archer.

On the other hand, the 'spectacles axe' seems admirably to fit into the puzzle. It is a product of the Bronze Age and belongs particularly to the period 1600 to 1200 B. C. Just as the peculiarities of stone-technique pass over into bronze, so the Bronze Age presently transmits some of its unusual features to iron. Hence, we find the existence of a few specimens of iron 'spectacles axes'. These belong to the early years of the first millennium B. C. Consequently, Homer's expression 'shooting through the iron' must be something more than a poetical figment. At any rate, we are able to affirm that iron axe-heads, with holes all ready for the test in archery, were known as early as Homer's day and generation. Perhaps the only examples known to him were constituted of iron, and he hesitated to postulate the existence of a bronze prototype, which would have been more appropriate to the age of the heroes. The axe found in the Vapheio Tomb must have been brought into Greece by Phoenician traders—a view which gains very strong support from the consideration that the same tomb yielded a Phoenician<sup>41</sup> gem with an engraving of an Oriental deity brandishing an axe of similar pattern. The suggestion may be made that it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that, if ever the site of the palace of Odysseus is discovered and excavated, specimens of these curious tools may there come to light.

It is necessary now to return to the passage in the *Odyssey*<sup>42</sup> wherein we have the all-too-brief account

of the execution of the performance of 'shooting through the iron'.

Odysseus, says the passage, took his arrow and placed it on the bow's elbow, and drew the bowstring and the notched arrow even from the stool whereon he sat; and he shot the arrow with good aim and did not miss the *πρώτης στείλειης* of all the axes; but the arrow weighted with bronze passed right through *θώραξε*.

What is the meaning of *στείλειη*, and, more especially, of *πρώτη στείλειη*? This is the only occurrence of the noun in Homer, and it may in all reason be expected to differ in meaning from the neuter form *στείλειον*, also a hapax legomenon in Homer<sup>43</sup>, whose context, however, makes it clear that an axe-haft is indicated. The notices of *στείλειη* by the ancient commentators are wholly valueless and indicate that they were completely perplexed as to the meaning of the word. Nor are modern authorities much more illuminating. Many of them resort to some vague identification of *στείλειη* with the axe-head itself, which is surely a counsel of despair. Others assume that the word bore the same meaning in Homeric Greek that it did in classic Greek, namely 'helve'; on the analogy of the expression *πρώτος ῥυμός*, 'the end of the chariot-pole'<sup>44</sup>, they render *πρώτη στείλειη* by 'the foremost point of the haft', or by 'the top of the handle'. This view was adopted by Monro<sup>45</sup>, and it is accepted by various scholars who have fallen under Monro's influence, including Professor Murray<sup>46</sup>, in his translation of the *Odyssey* in The Loeb Classical Library. It has found its way also into Cunliffe's *Homeric Lexicon*<sup>47</sup>.

This last, is after all, not a particularly happy or logical solution of the problem. If Odysseus did not miss the *στείλαιαι* of all the axes, he must surely have hit them; it is an absurdity to conceive of his arrow as glancing off one after another of the twelve handle-ends. Since it is impossible that a solid body can be meant, we are left with the series of apertures, simply, of the twelve axes, the 'spectacles' of the Syrian type. It must be these perforations that the word *στείλειη* signifies.

A further consideration is found in the proper understanding of the word *θώραξε*. Though it is generally agreed that it means here 'out of the other end' of the row, there has been no lack of writers, from Pope to Professor Woodhouse<sup>48</sup>, who insist on its literal interpretation—'through the door of the palace'. Professor Woodhouse is indeed very decided on the point. "... It is mere perversity", he avers, "to attempt to argue away the plain sense of the line, in order to make it square with the implications of the context..."<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, the metaphorical use of the word in Homer is well attested in the several passages where

<sup>39</sup>*Odyssey* 5.236. <sup>41</sup>*Iliad* 6.40, 16.471.

<sup>40</sup>D. B. Monro, *Homer's Odyssey*, Books XIII-XXIV (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1901).

<sup>41</sup>A. T. Murray, *Homer, The Odyssey*, Translated (Two Volumes, 1919, 1924).

<sup>42</sup>Richard John Cunliffe, *A Lexicon of the Homeric Dialect* (London, Blackie and Son, 1924).

<sup>43</sup><sup>104</sup>.  
<sup>44</sup>In *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* 25.6, column 2, Professor S. E. Bassett cited evidence which to his mind proves "conclusively that the word *θώραξε* here need have no reference whatsoever to a doorway". C. K>.

<sup>39</sup>See *Amtliche Berichte aus den Preussischen Staatssammlungen*, 30 (1909), 97-99.

<sup>40</sup>*J. Anthropologie* 14 (1903), 664.

<sup>41</sup>*Archäologische Ephemeris* for 1889, Plate 8.1.

<sup>42</sup>21.419-423.

it is applied to the emergence of men<sup>49</sup> or fishes<sup>50</sup> from the water, and in particular to the removal of the spear from the thigh of Sarpedon<sup>51</sup>. Moreover, there is another and a very cogent reason, as it appears to me, for rejecting the 'open-door' interpretation. It has not, so far as I am aware, been noticed by commentators. Whatever the circumstances may have been in the older days when Odysseus shot through the axes for his own diversion, there must have been a strong necessity, when the present contest had been arranged, for taking measures to prevent the possibility of a dishonest shot being attempted by one of the competitors. Penelope assumes, of course, that the suitors have sufficient strength and address to string the bow. Now, when an arrow is discharged from a weapon as powerful as that of Odysseus, and is flying with high velocity, the first stages of its flight are almost invisible to the eye of the beholder. In the subdued light of the *megaron*, nothing would be easier for a dishonest wooer, lacking confidence in his own marksmanship, than to direct his aim a little above or to one side of the objective. The arrow would be gone in a trice, and who could assert that he had failed in his undertaking? It would have been the same as shooting at a target with an open bull's-eye.

To prevent the possibility of a dishonest shot of this sort, we may suppose that the master of ceremonies, Telemachus, placed a 'back-stop' of wood or leather just beyond the farthest axe to receive the successful shaft, and to indicate the ultimate position of the shaft. *Ex hypothesi*, the shot through the open doorway is out of the question.

It is strange that the acceptance, by so many scholars, of *θύραζε* in the figurative sense has failed to suggest to them what must surely be the only acceptable meaning of the expression *πρώτη στείλει*. The noun, as we have seen, can mean nothing other than the opening in the axe-head. To pursue the figure, we may regard the aperture as a sort of gateway in the blade of the axe. The shaft enters and passes through it. Now, in the Homeric poems we find the adjective *πρώτος* joined several times with *θύρη*<sup>52</sup>, and once with *πύλη*<sup>53</sup>. The meaning of the words taken in conjunction is always 'the opening of the gate (doorway)', 'the entering in of the gate', or 'the very gateway'. Similarly, in the present passage, *πρώτη στείλει* must mean the opening, or the entering in, of the aperture in the axe-head. We may translate by 'the arrow did not miss the entrance of the hole <or, the actual hole> in every one of the axes, but went right through and out of the end of the row'.

The question has more than once been asked, What function did the perforations in the heads of the 'spectacles axes' perform? The usual answer<sup>54</sup> is that the presence of the holes served to lighten the weight—an explanation that might well suggest some obvious and ludicrous parallels—, or, as Chr. Belger<sup>55</sup> naively ex-

presses it, 'to save the material'. Rather, I see good reason for considering them to be vestigial remains of what was once useful, indeed indispensable, in the evolution of the axe. In three instances<sup>56</sup> with which I am familiar the holes are so small that their presence could not have perceptibly lessened the weight of the axe or have saved the bronze. Moreover, there is direct communication between the helve-hole and each of the two apertures. The latter feature is to be observed in other cases where the holes are very large<sup>57</sup>, though not, it is true, on the Vapheio axe. The assumption seems clear that in these instances a thong was passed through the holes and tied tightly over the back of the axe so that pressure would be exerted thereby on the helve, with a view to holding it tightly in place.

This carries us one step backward. But we are thus enabled to discover with tolerable certainty the real purpose of the apertures which were called in Homeric days *στείλαι*. They were 'thong-holes', which may also be regarded as 'helving-holes', inasmuch as they served to connect handle and head. Probably, in still more primitive conditions there was no helve-hole present—it had not yet been evolved—and thus the *στείλαι* served, in company with their thongs, as the sole means of effecting a junction between blade and haft<sup>58</sup>.

In support of this belief certain analogies may be adduced. In a method of spear-head hafting<sup>59</sup> that prevailed in the island of Cyprus and in the Cyclades about the close of the Early Cycladic Period the spear-head was bound to the shaft by a thong that passed through two little holes in the head itself. Later on, the socketed spear-head makes its appearance in the same territories. In a certain section of the Danubian region there is found a dagger<sup>60</sup> at the base of whose haft are two large apertures which are seemingly glorified rivet-holes which were thus retained after a different method of hafting had been adopted by the makers. There is also the analogy of the winged celt<sup>61</sup> of bronze, a European product, on which the loops or rings of metal serve, at a certain stage of development, to connect, with the aid of a thong, the head and the handle.

It is possible, then, to appreciate the philological connection between *στείλει* ('helve') and *στηλείον* ('helving-hole'), which has hitherto remained in obscurity.

In course of time, the introduction of the orthodox method of helving completely obviates the necessity for putting 'helving-holes' in the axe-head; but some *vis inertiae*—perhaps simply oriental conservatism—

<sup>49</sup>These are the axes from Kadesh, Tell et-Tin, and Kafer-Djarras.  
<sup>50</sup>As in an example from Beirut (*L'Anthropologie* 14 [1903], 665, Figure 6).

<sup>51</sup>Professor C. W. E. Miller, of The Johns Hopkins University, has suggested to me that the word is to be connected with *ἵσθημι* in the sense of 'to make fast', rather than, as it is usually taken, with *στέλλω*.

<sup>52</sup>Described and illustrated by H. R. Hall, *The Civilization of Greece in the Bronze Age*, 86-87, Figures 98, 99 (London, Methuen and Company, 1928).

<sup>53</sup>See V. Gordon Childe, *The Danube in Prehistory*, Plate 1 (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1920).

<sup>54</sup>On celts see the article of L'Abbé Breuil, *L'Âge du Bronze dans le Bassin de Paris*, in *L'Anthropologie* 16 (1905), 119-171; V. Gordon Childe, *The Dawn of European Civilization*, 215 (see note 21, above).

<sup>49</sup>*Iliad* 21.20, 237; *Odyssey* 5.410.

<sup>50</sup>*Iliad* 16.408; *Odyssey* 12.254. <sup>51</sup>*Iliad* 5.694.

<sup>52</sup>*Iliad* 22.66; *Odyssey* 1.255, 22.250. <sup>53</sup>*Iliad* 8.411.

<sup>54</sup>As Tsountas and Manatt, 207 (see note 23, above); Thomsen, 206 (see note 19, above).

<sup>55</sup>Chr. Belger, *Berliner Philologische Wochenschrift* 23 (1890), 712. He was the first, I think, to suggest that the Vapheio axe conforms to the requirements of the competition scene.

continues to retain the perforations after the occasion for their usefulness disappears. In the Homeric account, iron has superseded bronze for some implements, including this curiosity. We have already noticed oriental axes of similar design and metal.

It is little wonder that the word *στειλή* proved a complete puzzle to the Greeks of historical times. If the view that I have just set forth be correct, the term, both in its origin and in its Homeric use, could have meant nothing to them, as it must have become obsolete in the course of the Dark Ages of Greece. It may be regarded as certain that the word originated in Asia Minor or thereabouts, where the Greeks must have had their first experience with this particular type of axe.

The second conclusion of Professor Woodhouse may now be briefly reviewed. He regards the shot of Odysseus, as has been observed, purely as a test of skill in marksmanship<sup>62</sup>. But a reconstruction of the *mise-en-scène* tends to prove that this is not quite so. The hero possesses a set of these old-fashioned axes of the 'spectacles' type imported from the Orient. The handles of these are implanted in the earthen floor of the *megaron*; the heads stand in an even row, so that to look through the upper or the lower series of holes is like peering through a telescope with the lenses removed. Either series may be utilized for the shot, but no axe must be touched by the arrow in its flight: else will it be deflected. Now, inasmuch as any missile when it is discharged horizontally describes a parabola in its course, it would be necessary, to bring off this shot successfully, that the trajectory be extremely 'flat', as that term is used in ballistics. In other words, the arrow must leave the bow at a high rate of velocity. This calls for a strong bow and a powerful bowman. If marksmanship alone were in question, the archer would be equally successful in his execution were he to shoot merely through the hole in the most distant axe. The nearer axes would serve no purpose in the game, and Homer would thus be guilty of describing a senseless competition. The perfect shot demanded both skill and strength. A partial parallel to this feat of arms is found in the history of archery in Japan<sup>63</sup>. The Japanese experts used to demonstrate their prowess, though not their marksmanship, by shooting down a long low-roofed corridor and fixing their arrows in the wall at the farther end.

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

A. D. FRASER

## REVIEWS

Latin Writers of the Fifth Century. By Eleanor Shipley Duckett. New York: Henry Holt and Company (1930). Pp. xix + 271. \$2.50.

The last few years have shown a marked advance in medieval studies. This is especially true of the study of medieval literature. Note the following books and articles: E. K. Rand, *Founders of the Middle Ages* (see

THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 22.167-168); F. J. E. Raby, *A History of Christian-Latin Poetry from the Beginning to the Close of the Middle Ages* (see THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 23.54-56); the articles on literature in *The Legacy of the Middle Ages*, edited by G. C. Crump and E. F. Jacob (Oxford University Press, 1927); C. Folligno, *Latin Thought During the Middle Ages* (see THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 24.103-104); M. L. W. Laistner, *Thought and Letters in Western Europe A. D. 500-900* (New York, Lincoln Mac Veagh: The Dial Press, 1931); F. A. Wright and T. A. Sinclair, *A History of Later Latin Literature from the Middle of the Fourth to the End of the Seventeenth Century* (New York, Macmillan, 1931)<sup>1</sup>; and the third volume of the well known standard book, by Max Manitius, *Geschichte der Lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters* (Munich, Beck, 1931). To this list Professor Duckett's book is a welcome addition.

The period selected by Professor Duckett for study is one of the crucial periods of Roman history. It witnessed the fall of the Empire and of pagan institutions, the chaos of barbarian inroads, and, above all, the steady growth of triumphant Christianity. While a stormy period like this can hardly foster great literature, yet a literature reflecting the prevailing social and political unrest, and expressive of that unrest, existed, and deserves interpretation, for only so, to use Professor Duckett's own words (x), can a "bridge" be built "for passengers from one to the other <i. e. from the fourth century to the humanistic period> across the fifth and following centuries that intervene..."

Professor Duckett clearly states the aim of her book (ix-x):

...<The picture offered here> is drawn for lay students, for those readers of pagan classics and ecclesiastic records who do not sit in theological halls and colleges, and are not given to deep consideration of technical works on Church history, who nevertheless may welcome a brief account of Latin writings between pagan and mediaeval days....

While the author acquitted herself well of the task she set before herself, at the same time it must be stated that she went further than mere writing for "lay students" would have required her to go. The latter will, no doubt, find the literary side of her book enjoyable, her metrical translations charming; students of English literature will be delighted to follow the parallels between the poets of biblical history and Milton's *Paradise Lost*, so well traced in Chapter III. But, from the historical point of view, they will stumble over a series of swiftly moving events and changes which practically revolutionized Europe. Only a student or a layman who is pretty thoroughly familiar with the chain of events in the period covered by Professor Duckett's book will grasp the significance of her work. The table giving the chief historical events (xv-xviii) and Chapter I (1-16), which give a very

<sup>1</sup>For a review of this book see THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 26. 21-23. <Reference should be made also to the periodical called *Speculum*, published by The Mediaeval Academy of America. This contains articles about medieval life and letters, and reviews of books that deal with those subjects. The Mediaeval Academy has also, for the past ten years, published annually a *Bulletin of Progress in Mediaeval Studies*. C. K.>

<sup>62</sup>94-96.

<sup>63</sup>Some account of the exploits of Japanese bowmen is to be found in William Justice Ford's article *Archery*, in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*<sup>11</sup>.

concise account of the background of fifth-century writings<sup>2</sup>, constitute fare too meager for lay students. To the initiated these parts of the book will prove a refreshing survey.

The contents of the book are as follows:

Introduction, by Eric Milner-White (v-vii); Author's Foreword (ix-xii); Contents (xiii-xiv); Chief Historical Events (xv-xviii); Literary Dates of the Fifth Century (xix); Chapter I, The Background of the Fifth Century Writings (3-16); Chapter II, Secular Poetry (17-50); Chapter III, The Poets of Biblical History (51-92); Chapter IV, Historical Events in Christian Poetry (93-107); Chapter V, Christian Prose: Jerome and Augustine (108-157); Chapter VI, Christian Prose: Orosius and Salvian (158-181); Chapter VII, Monastic Writings of the West in the Fifth Century (182-223); Chapter VIII, Secular Prose: Martianus Capella (224-234); Abbreviations (235); Notes (237-254); Select Bibliography (255-263); General Bibliography (264-265); Index (267-271).

Of Chapter I, I have made mention already. Chapter II deals with Claudius Claudianus (17-35), Namatianus (35-44), the *Carmina* of Merobaudes (44-46), and Apollinaris Sidonius (46-50). The account is sound and clear. Of the work of Claudian only so much as belongs to the fifth century is stressed. It is worth while to quote what the author has to say on the question of Claudian's religious adherence (35):

...The thought does not seem unreasonable that the poet, while giving formal allegiance in his verse to the religious tradition of his forefathers and rendering foremost glory thereto in his tribute to its external embodiment in the City of ancient Rome, could yet find it possible at the will of his Emperor and of his patron Stilicho... to add the Christian Lord to the company of the old gods...

But the author has to admit (35) that the question is still in doubt. Inasmuch as a good deal of space is devoted to Claudian's *Bellum Gothicum*, the Bibliography, though select, ought to include the edition of this poem by Helmut Schroff (*Claudians Gedicht vom Gotenkrieg*, Herausgegeben und Erklärt [Klassisch-Philologische Studien, Herausgegeben von F. Jacoby, Heft 8, Berlin, Emil Ebering, 1927]). This, by the way, is the only modern edition of this poem known to me.

I have already made reference to Chapter II. It is the best, the most original, and the most illuminating part of the book. The biblical epics of Marius Victor (57-64), Avitus (65-77), Sedulius (77-82), and Dracontius (82-90) are fully analyzed and illustrated by profuse metrical translations. Attention is called to parallels between the accounts given by these poets of the Creation and Fall and those of Milton (70-71, 86, 90-91), a feature of the book which most students of literature and those of English in particular will appreciate. The chapter contains also a discussion of the *Chronica* of the prose writer Sulpicius Severus (51-57); his other works are considered in Chapter VII.

The poets of biblical history are followed (Chapter IV) by those writers whose works are interesting

chiefly (93) for their "illumination of this age <= the fifth century>, with its grievous record of pestilence, famine, slaughter, and oppression of all kinds...". Among these poets are Endecheus, Orientius, and Paulinus of Pella.

In lucidity and force of exposition the account of Jerome and Augustine (Chapter V) matches Chapter III. Orosius and Salvian are also very sympathetically treated, and their works are well analyzed. The difference, too, between Orosius the apologist and Orosius the historian is well grasped. Concerning the birthplace of Orosius (249, note 11 to Chapter VI) it has been recently, and, in my opinion, conclusively, pointed out, that he was born in Bracara (Braga): see J. A. Davids, *De Orosio et Sancto Augustino Priscillianistarum Adversariis*, 7 (Dissertation, Haag, 1930). In the account of the sources of Orosius's narrative (172) I miss two names, those of Tacitus and Suetonius. So far as Orosius's style is concerned (172), a repeated reading and study of Orosius make me accept the author's statement that his Latin is forceful; I cannot, however, subscribe to her thesis that it is clear. It certainly is not clear in the opening chapters of each book. The overloading of poetic and rhetorical elements—both high-flown—makes him at times almost incoherent. The haste in which Orosius wrote his history may perhaps account for this defect, or, perhaps, as Schanz pointed out (Volume 4, Part 2, 490), in his desire not to copy his sources verbatim, he preferred "...seine eigene Mitarbeit zum Ausdruck zu bringen..."

Outstanding in Chapter VII is the treatment of Sulpicius Severus (184-195), and of Cassian (206-223). These discussions are a concise sketch of the spread of monasticism in the East and the West. Students that cannot use the originals or those that cannot avail themselves of them will find the outline of Cassian especially helpful. The same is true of the vividly written account of Martianus Capella.

Professor Duckett has produced a very useful book. Every page shows wide reading in classical and medieval literature, and sound judgment, which manifests itself in the fact that, though she is very sympathetic with the authors she discusses, she does not lose sight of their demerits. She also abstains from those ponderous generalizations and futile controversies which make the task of reading a book a burden rather than a pleasure; she prefers to limit herself to a clear exposition of well established and well documented facts rather than to indulge in fanciful conjectures. Her metrical translations are felicitous, and merit high praise. Though Professor Duckett's book is not a scholarly contribution in the full sense of the word 'scholarly', it will prove an excellent guide and reference book, especially since it is equipped with a select, but good bibliography and notes.

<sup>2</sup>This chapter begins with the statement, "The fateful record of these last days is a familiar tale..."



The Way of the Greeks. By F. R. Earp. Oxford University Press: London, Humphrey Milford (1929). Pp. viii + 224. \$3.00.

The title of the book under review<sup>1</sup>, Professor Earp tells us in his Preface (v), "refers to the Greek belief that there is a Right Way, or *δίκη*, of doing all things. . . ." He also gives warning that his book is sadly informal in style and arrangement, and, as critics will at once note, it 'falls between two stools'. It is neither a formal treatise addressed only to scholars, nor yet a handbook for the wholly ignorant. Both these defects spring from the same cause, an obstinate belief that the ancient Greeks are so interesting that others besides professed scholars must wish to know something of them. . . .

These words are quoted at the outset to give the author's point of view about his book and his readers. His main subject is given in the title of his first chapter, The Power of Tradition in Greek Life, the paradox that, while the Greeks "achieved in most branches of human activity a progress wholly beyond parallel or comparison. . .", in their method of working they were cautious followers of tradition. This is well known in sculpture or vase-painting, where all progress is made (1) by "slow modification in all aspects. . .", but is less obvious in literature and other sides of Greek life. But systematic study of the recurrences of thought and phrase in the literature shows that the same principle is at work here also; stock themes and commonplaces are constantly recurring, and (4)

the use made of them is quite frank and unashamed. For commonplaces deal with the things of permanent interest. . . . Men in similar circumstances do normally think and act and speak in similar ways. . . .<sup>2</sup>

The Greek writer is just as ready to use these commonplaces as the vase-painter is to avail himself of the conventions of his own art. Professor Earp, however, wishes to have the background right (7-8); he holds (8-9) that "poets and philosophers can never be reliable witnesses in regard to the thoughts of the average man. . . ." He searches, therefore, in his second chapter, Sources of Evidence for the Traditional Greek View, for the views of the ordinary Greek and decides that the most valuable evidence comes from the orators (10-11). On page 11 he says, ". . . For an orator, if he wishes to persuade, must take the standpoint of his audience and address himself to their actual beliefs and ideas; and his audience are *ex hypothesi* average men. . . ." From this point of view he gives a criticism of the individual orators which is admirable, and most

illuminating for the student, as well as a brief estimate of the other authors and the light they throw on the subject.

The middle chapters of the book deal in the main with religion and morality; the power of *νόμος*, 'custom', is illustrated throughout.

The last three chapters, Language, Emotion in Art and Literature, and Meaning of Words, are of especial interest. Professor Earp points out how much of the vividness and color of Homer is due to the use (169) of stock epithets, and how this use persists in later poets, with extension, as "...Greek surpasses all languages in its power of forming compounds, especially in adjectives. Even modern science has discovered this, and made use of it. Every fresh idea can find easy and clear expression in a new compound. . . ." He illustrates this (169-174), especially from Aeschylus and his delight in the obvious qualities of things, e. g. the whiteness and softness of milk. On page 174 Professor Earp says:

This spontaneous delight in things is typical and very significant. . . .

It is this combination of maturity and freshness that makes Greek Literature and Art unique and restorative beyond any other. . . .

On page 178 he writes: "...no art or literature in Western Europe. . . has regained the special quality of Greek Art because the combination of maturity and zest has not returned, and hardly can return. . ."

This brief review cannot do justice to a book which should be read by all teachers and students and lovers of Greek, but it makes an attempt to imply by quotation here and there the wealth of suggestion in the book. It goes without saying that Professor Earp will not carry his readers with him at all points, but, even where they disagree with him, they will find his views stimulating and thought-provoking. The abundance of quotation from the literature (usually in both languages) should receive special praise.

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GERTRUDE HIRST

### AN IMPORTANT ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERY

In the periodical called *Antiquity*, A Quarterly Review of Archaeology<sup>1</sup>, the Editor, Mr. O. G. S. Crawford, writes as follows (6.257-259, September, 1932):

The outstanding archaeological event of a decade rich in surprises has been the discovery of the Indus Civilization and the publication of Sir John Marshall's account<sup>2</sup> thereof. Now an unknown civilization, if it turn up far away and isolated from more familiar ground, may leave the European archaeologist cold; we are naturally preoccupied with our own continent and the adjacent zones of North Africa and Hither Asia from which Europe received enlightenment. No such aloofness is possible in the case of Mohenjo-daro and the civilization it represents. A whole series of links, from precious stones of Indian origin down to

<sup>1</sup>This periodical is printed by John Bellows, Gloucester, England. The annual subscription price is 20 shillings.

<sup>2</sup>In a footnote here Mr. Crawford refers to a work entitled *Mohenjo-daro and the Indus Civilization*, in two volumes, published in 1931 (Arthur Probsthain, London. The work costs £ 12, 12 s.).

<sup>1</sup>The contents of the book are as follows: Preface (v-vii); I. The Power of Tradition in Greek Life (1-9); II. Sources of Evidence for the Traditional Greek View (10-29); III. The Tribal Nature of Greek Morality (30-40); IV. The Contents of Morality (41-66); V. Religion (67-93); VI. Sin (94-105); VII. Future Life (106-116); VIII. Religion and Institutions (117-124); IX. The Relation of Greece to the Savage (125-138); X. The Gods in Homer (139-156); XI. The Dramatists (157-161); XII. The Guilt of Oedipus (162-167); XIII. Language (168-181); XIV. Emotion in Art and Literature (182-201); XV. Meaning of Words (202-221); Epilogue (221-223); Index (224). C. K.

<sup>2</sup>One is irresistibly reminded here of Nicias and his address to his soldiers, as given in Thucydides 7.69: "mentioning other things also, such as men would say at a time now so critical, not guarding against being thought by any one to bring forward old and hackneyed topics, and such as are advanced in all cases alike about men's wives and children and country's gods, but loudly appealing to them, because they think they may be of service in the present consternation" (I give Dale's translation, in Bohn's Classical Library).

imports of actual Indian manufactures, establishes beyond all shadow of doubt the intimate connexion between the valleys of the Indus and of the Tigris-Euphrates round about 2500 B. C. And right on the frontiers of Europe two highly specialized types of gold bead from the 'treasures' of Troy demonstrate the westward extension of the same nexus.

These discoveries are revolutionary: they demand a complete reorientation of our attitude towards the birthplace of civilization. The rôles of Egypt and Babylonia have been familiar from ancient tradition. Romantic faith in the legends of Greece led Schliemann to Troy and Mycenae. Strictly scientific induction guided a man of genius to Knossos, where by a stroke of the spade he was able to set the products of Schliemann's digging in their proper context. But in India the by-products of railway building catching the enlightened eyes of Sir John Marshall revealed a civilization that had lain absolutely forgotten for 4000 years.

This discovery has enlarged the domain of scientific prehistory, the area for which we may hope to establish a reasonably coherent system of knowledge, by some 750,000 square miles. In seeking the cradle of civilized life we are no longer restricted to Breasted's 'Fertile Crescent' balancing the relative claims of Egypt and Sumer. The Nile indeed is found to be on the western edge of a vast constellation of centres of urban life.

The intercourse between India and Sumer now established opens up a vista of caravans traversing the intervening deserts and crossing the mountain barriers, range after range, and of ships ploughing the waters of the Erythraean Sea 4500 years ago. That may help to banish the uneasy scepticism the more imaginative of us must feel when we read of Merchant Venturers in Bronze pushing up the Danube valley, or Ancient Mariners crossing the Bay of Biscay and rounding Cape Wrath leaving a litter of megalithic tombs behind them.

Again, the intercourse newly revealed was between highly differentiated and individualized civilizations. Mohenjo-daro is stamped with distinctively Indian idiosyncrasies, just as surely as pre-Sargonic Kish and the prehistoric graves of Ur are emphatically Sumerian and Old Kingdom Egypt is unmistakably Nilotic. Art and Religion, metallurgy and jewelry, are already completely specialized and exhibit arbitrary peculiarities which have persisted for millennia, some even to our own day.

But that circumstance demands an enlargement of our chronological horizon no less drastic than in our spatial outlook; the revolution is not confined to Euclidean space but invades the new space-time. For,

underlying the very real differences between the three great civilizations, and transcending the superficial agreements resulting from mutual intercourse, are fundamental uniformities so deep-seated, so comprehensive and so numerous, as to preclude the idea of independent origin in three areas later so closely inter-related. And indeed hints of connexion, vastly earlier than those hitherto considered, are not wanting. Lapis lazuli derived from Afghanistan is found in early Predynastic graves in Egypt; a bead of amazonite from the Nilghary Hills of India was dug up from a prediluvian layer at Ur. And from hundreds of mounds extending westward from the Indus through Waziristan, Baluchistan and Seistan Sir Aurel Stein has collected sherds of painted pottery, fragments of stone vases, female figurines, stamp seals and beads of lapis or hard stone that must somehow link on with the similar material turning up at the base of every ancient site in Assyria, Babylonia and Elam. Whatever conclusions a scientific examination of the mounds and sherds may eventually justify, the scraps of evidence available suggest a continuum of less highly specialized cultures from which the Indian, the Sumerian and presumably even the Egyptian eventually crystallized out. But the process of differentiation, complete before 2500 B. C., must have taken very many centuries. And yet all these shadowy cultures emerging from this hoary background already possessed copper!

Here is a field for speculation. It might more profitably be regarded as a field for work. The province newly attached to the system of European-Oriental prehistory lies wholly within the British Empire. The conservation and proper examination of documents so vitally significant for human history is entrusted in an unique degree to us British and to our Indian fellow-subjects. A magnificent beginning has indeed been made; thanks to Sir John Marshall, Mohenjo-daro has been excavated in a fitting manner, and, what is still more creditable, the results up to date have been published with a promptitude almost unprecedented in the annals of Oriental research. Sir Aurel Stein has undertaken a thorough survey of a vast and most inhospitable territory and has published, again with commendable rapidity, two richly illustrated reports on the epoch-making results of his tours. But this is only a beginning; the prehistoric riches of India have only been scratched; the results raise more problems than they solve.

Obviously there is matter here of importance to the student of the Classics.

CHARLES KNAPP

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### TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Preface.....  | iii   |
| General Introduction.....                                   | ix-x  |
| Chapter I. Aeneas the Roman.....                            | 1-15  |
| Chapter II. The Dido-Aeneas Romance..                       | 16-40 |
| Chapter III. The Fastigia Rerum in the Life of Naevius..... | 41-57 |
| Chapter IV. Some Remarks on Naevius as Poet and as Man..... | 58-66 |
| Commentary on Naevius, Bellum Punicum, Fragments 1-7.....   | 67-92 |
| List of Abbreviations: Bibliography.....                    | 92-95 |

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